

# WATER: Will There Be Enough?

Determining how much water is “just right” for the environment under a variety of circumstances helps to build a foundation for sound water management. Many of us take for granted that the

water we need will always be there, and seldom think about what’s involved in protecting the resource to make sure it remains available. But water managers are immersed in the issues and technical details: from finding ways to provide drainage and water supply for environmental, commercial and municipal needs, to carrying out water quality improvement projects.

Regional water supply plans provide a 20-year roadmap for protecting water resources, and are required by Florida law. This is no small effort, as South Florida’s population continues to grow rapidly and restoring our environment becomes a top priority. That’s why developing a regional water supply plan is also essential in establishing sound water management practices. Future needs for water must be addressed in the context of all needs: residential, industrial or agricultural, or to nourish natural systems.

Another important mandate is to establish minimum flows and levels, or MFLs, for priority water bodies including surface waters such as lakes and rivers or groundwater sources such as aquifers. These flows and levels are set by determining at what point withdrawals from a water body would be significantly harmful to the aquifers or the ecology of the surrounding area. When establishing MFLs, consideration is given to both consumptive and non-consumptive uses, physical alterations which have occurred in the watershed and the ecological performance during droughts. To date, seven MFLs have been established, and the current MFL priority list identifies an additional 20 water bodies to be set from 2003 through 2008.

MFLs for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, which flows through southern Martin and northern Palm Beach counties, were recently established. The Northwest Fork, a federally designated “Wild and Scenic River,” lies within a watershed that is one of the last examples of a native cypress-river swamp habitat within southeast Florida. Over the years, major changes to the river system occurred, including dredging the Jupiter Inlet and the construction of the C-18 drainage canal, which improved navigation and drainage, encouraging development.



*Canoeists exploring the Loxahatchee River.*

Unfortunately, these changes also created unnatural flow patterns and reduced dry season freshwater flows. The establishment of MFLs mean the river will ultimately be protected with a more stable freshwater regime and future consumptive uses will be prohibited from reducing the flows. “The implementation of the MFL recovery plan is a significant step forward in improving the river’s health by greatly reducing and reversing the intrusion of saltwater into areas of the river where freshwater communities are found,” said Chip Merriam, deputy executive director for water resources.

The recovery plan for the Northwest Fork and surrounding watershed includes reconnecting the historic drainage basin, improving conveyance and construction of a below-ground reservoir in western Palm Beach County. The recently acquired parcel has three 35-foot deep working reservoir cells. “By December of 2007, a total of seven cells covering about 900 acres will be excavated to an average depth of 50 feet, using the largest dredging machine in the nation,” Merriam said. “It will provide approximately 45,000 acre-feet; or about 14.7 billion gallons of storage.”

The reservoir is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan to increase water supply, but it will also provide augmented freshwater flows to the river and help restore the Loxahatchee ecosystem.

The District is continuing to develop and refine solutions like these to respond to the challenge of regional water resource management.



*Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.*

**Q** I would love to take my family boating, fishing or hiking on recreational lands managed by the District. How do I find out where we can go, and what’s available at various locations?

**A** There are a wide variety of opportunities for recreation on District lands. Whenever possible, we work to make the lands acquired for restoration and water management available to the public, so that visitors can experience the region’s natural landscapes.

Check out our Public Use Guide at ([www.sfwmd.gov/org/clm/lcd/3\\_pug.html](http://www.sfwmd.gov/org/clm/lcd/3_pug.html)).

To have a copy mailed to you at home, call our Land Stewardship group at (561) 682-6635.

For information about other recreational environments in the state, see ([www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)) and ([www.nps.gov/](http://www.nps.gov/)).

Hunting and fishing licenses must be obtained from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. See their web site at ([www.floridaconservation.org](http://www.floridaconservation.org)).



## Who is Freddy?

His full name is “Freddie the Friendly Alligator.” He is the South Florida Water Management District’s mascot.

You may have seen him on the signs that mark the region’s canals and rivers.

Alligators are nature’s water managers, and are what most people picture when they think about Florida. Alligators dig deep holes in the swamp where they “hang out.” When drought strikes, these “gator holes” provide water and food (fish, turtles, insects) for many other species such as wading birds. At the same time, any creature sharing the alligator’s territory could become its lunch! That’s why people should remember that alligators are wild animals which should be admired, but also avoided.

## CREDITS

*WaterMatters* is produced by the South Florida Water Management District’s Department of Public Information to inform the public about District projects and programs. An internet version is also available in English and Spanish at [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**  
JO ANN HYRES

**EDITORS**  
MARSHA KIRCHHOFF  
PATTI NICHOLAS

**GRAPHIC ARTIST**  
ELLEN NEGLEY

**PHOTOGRAPHER**  
PATRICK LYNCH

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**  
SUSAN BENNETT  
GAIL IRWIN  
MARSHA KIRCHHOFF  
JAN LOFTIN  
JOHN NEUHARTH  
PATTI NICHOLAS  
GARRETT WALLACE

**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER**  
SUSAN BENNETT

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
HENRY DEAN

**GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS**  
NICOLÁS GUTIÉRREZ, JR., ESQ, *CHAIR*  
MIAMI

PAMELA BROOKS-THOMAS, *VICE-CHAIR*  
LAUDERHILL

IRELA M. BAGUÉ  
MIAMI

MICHAEL COLLINS  
ISLAMORADA

HUGH M. ENGLISH  
LABELLE

LENNART E. LINDAHL, P.E.  
PALM CITY

KEVIN MCCARTY  
DELRAY BEACH

HARKLEY R. THORNTON  
ST. CLOUD

TRUDI K. WILLIAMS, P.E.  
FORT MYERS

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts.*

*Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.*

Year 2, Issue 1



## Tell us what really “matters” to you about water!

Here’s what I think:

---

---

---

---

Name (if you want us to contact you) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ or e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Return this card to: Department of Public Information  
South Florida Water Management District  
P.O. Box 24680  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

You can also e-mail or call us with your comments and mailing list requests:  
[mkirchho@sfwmd.gov](mailto:mkirchho@sfwmd.gov) • [pnichola@sfwmd.gov](mailto:pnichola@sfwmd.gov) • Toll Free in FL 1- 800-432-2045



**sfwmd.gov**

**South Florida Water Management District**  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406  
561-686-8800 • FL WATS 1-800-432-2045  
[www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

**SOUND  
OFF!**